



# CHUNMUN FINDS FREEDOM

KAMLESH MOHINDRA

*Illustrations*

ASHISH SENGUPTA



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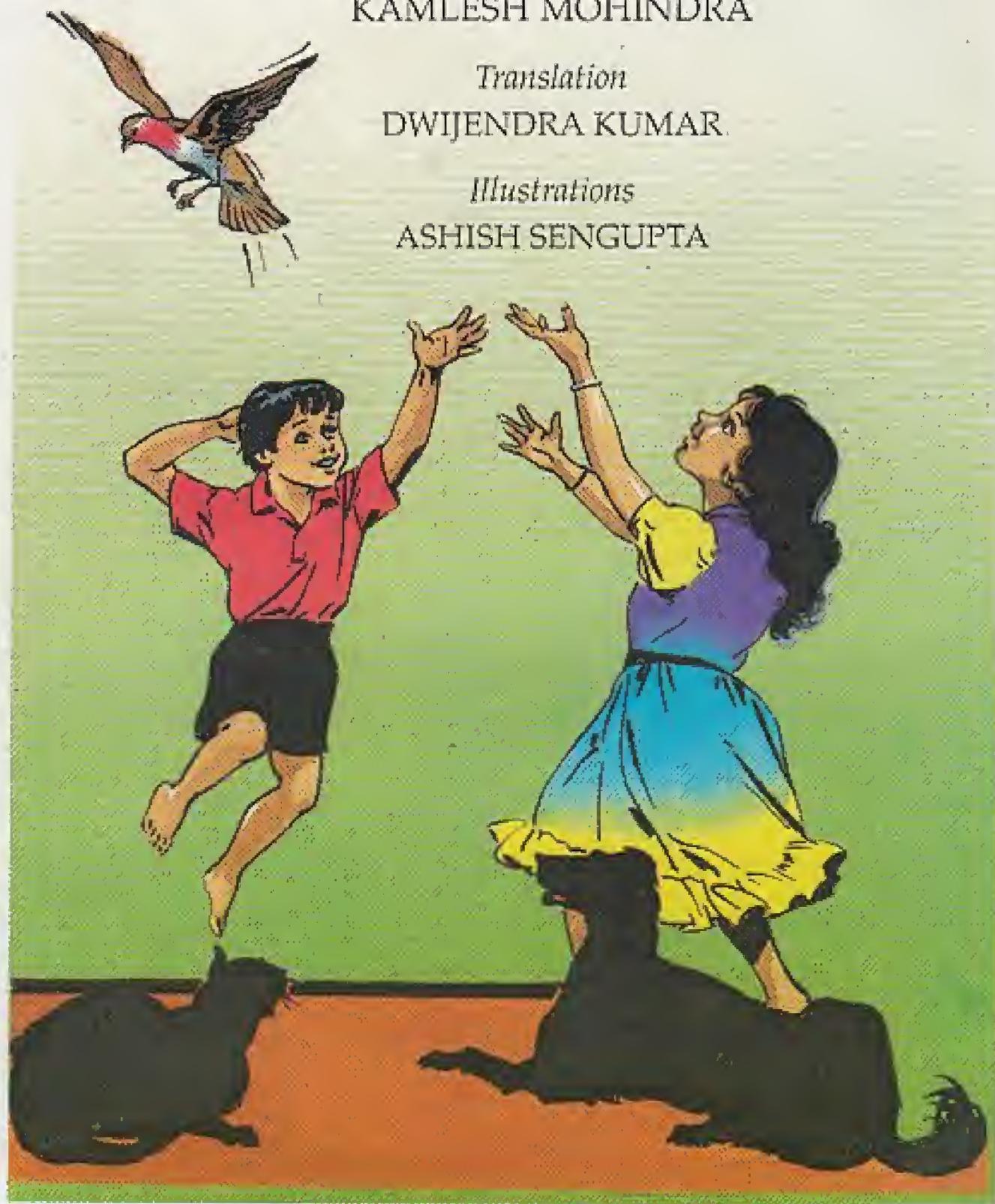
KAMLESH MOHINDRA

*Translation*

DWIJENDRA KUMAR

*Illustrations*

ASHISH SENGUPTA



NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA



Sumi was strolling with her mother one day. Suddenly, she saw a small bird lying in a drain! "Look Mummy! A birdie! Where is her mother? Where is her home?" She asked her mother.

Before her mother could reply, Sumi pulled her dupatta and said, "Poor birdie! Mummy, please let's take her to our home. We shall not leave without her today!"

Slowly and carefully Sumi's mother lifted the bird. She wrapped it in her handkerchief.

The bird had a broken leg. She was unable to stand on her feet. She was in acute pain, as she couldn't even open her eyes properly.



"Kuchoo! Kuchoo! Dear little birdie, don't worry! We shall take care of you. You will be all right soon," Sumi petted her.



On reaching home, Sumi ran to tell her brother, "Come Ravi, hurry! See we've brought a sweet little birdie. We picked it from a drain. Mummy has no objection. She can stay with us."



"Is that true!" Exclaimed Ravi, running towards Sumi joyfully.

"Oh poor birdie, her one leg is broken!" Caressing the bird Ravi said, "Even her eyes are closed because of the pain. Don't worry little birdie! You will be fine soon."

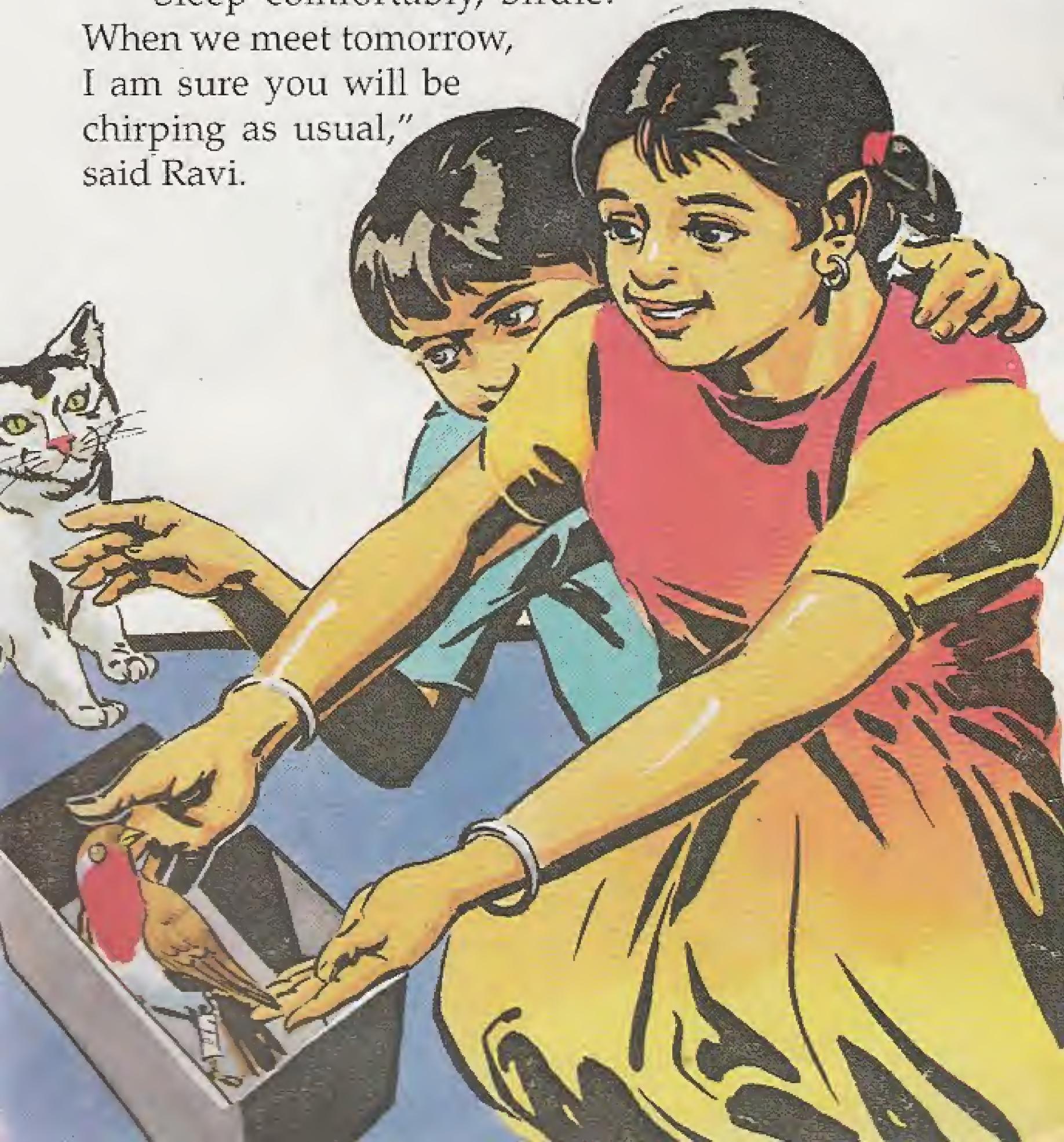




With the help of the mother, both the children tied a matchstick to straighten the bird's broken leg. They also made her drink some water with the help of a dropper. Soon the bird felt better and opened her eyes.

After a while, they prepared a soft bed for the bird in a carton box and Sumi gently placed her on it saying, "Good night, little one!"

"Sleep comfortably, birdie! When we meet tomorrow, I am sure you will be chirping as usual," said Ravi.



Back in their bedroom, Sumi complained, "Big brother, little birdie never told us her name!"

Ravi began to laugh, "She is fast asleep now! Why don't you think of a name for her?"



"I have two in mind," offered Sumi snapping her fingers, "Munia and Chunmun."

"Chunmun is fine," Ravi answered before the two went to sleep.

"Get up Sumi, hurry!" Ravi shouted to wake up his sister in the morning.

"Is Chunmun fine, now? Is she out of her bed?" Enquired Sumi as soon as she opened her eyes.





"Chunmun is not only out of her bed, she is out on her feet, chirping joyfully! Mummy has fed her bread soaked in milk for breakfast," said Ravi.

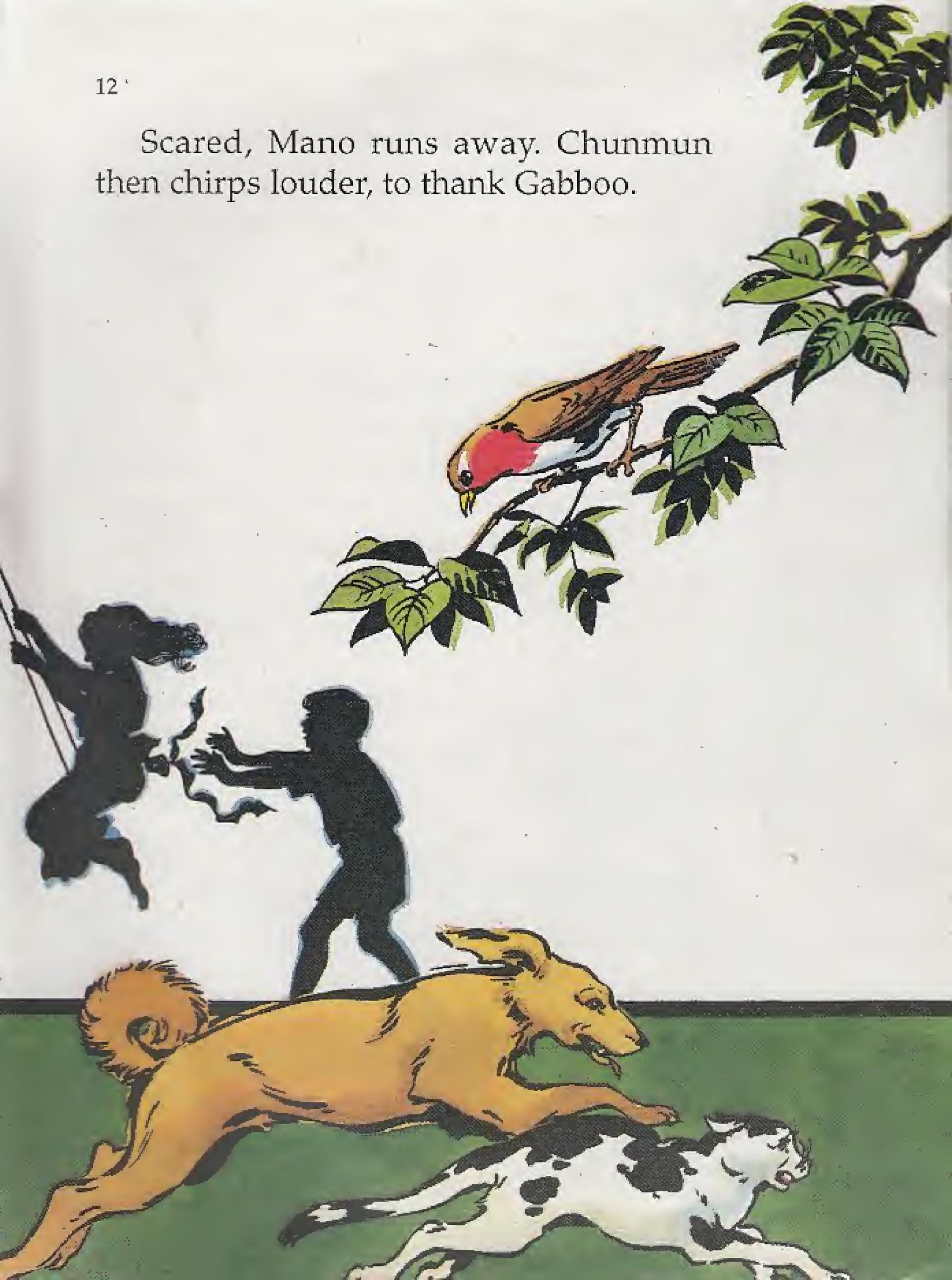
Hearing this, Sumi ran towards Chunmun.

The bird was chirping, while their dog Gabboo listened to her intently.

Chunmun and Gabboo soon became good friends. Gabboo kept guard on her. Mano, the pet cat of the gardener Abdul, was fond of eating birds! But whenever Mano tried to get near Chunmun, Gabboo started barking as if in warning, 'You can't enter. Run away from here or else...! Chunmun belongs to us.'



Scared, Mano runs away. Chunmun then chirps louder, to thank Gabboo.



As time passed, Chunmun recovered. Ravi and Sumi then decided to remove the matchstick from her leg. She started hopping a little on her own. Sometimes she sat on Gabboo's back for a joyride. On seeing Ravi or Sumi taking a bath, Chunmun wanted to do the same. She enjoyed soaking herself in water. She felt happy afterwards and fluttered her wet wings in excitement.



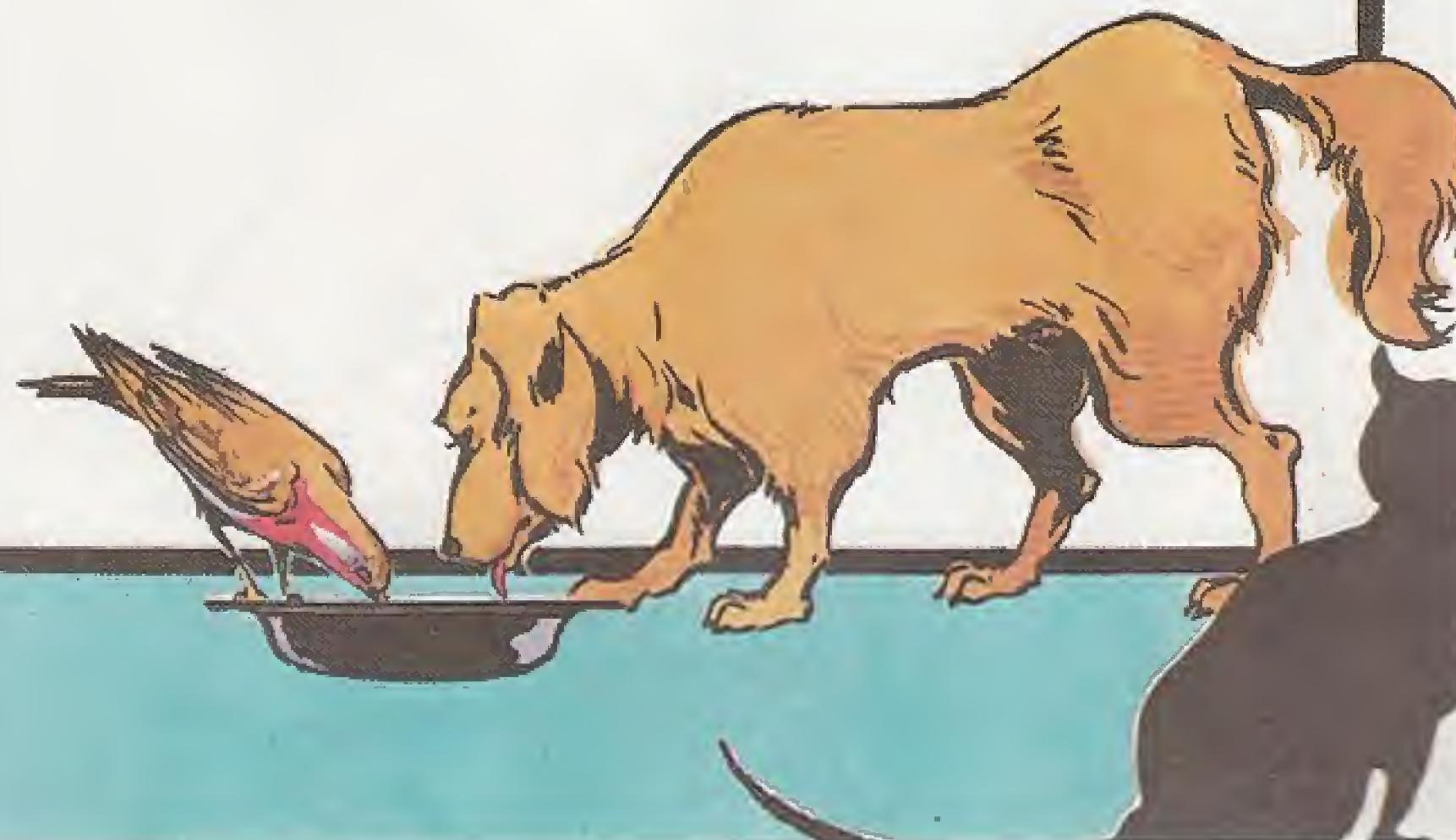
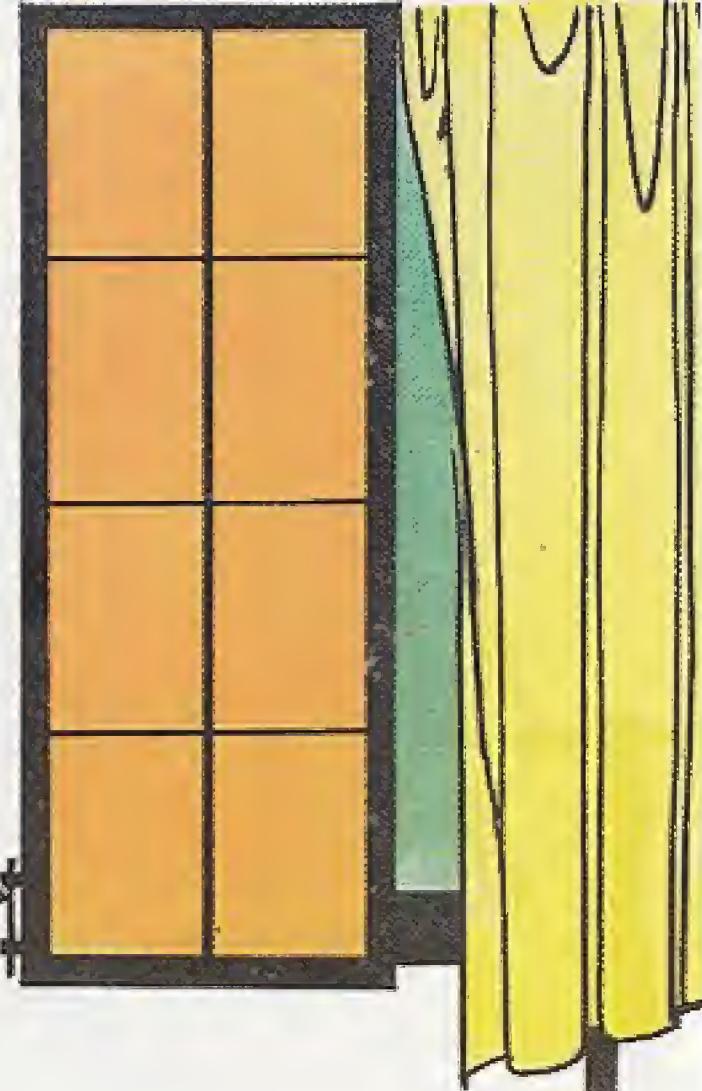
With the passing of time, Chunmun could fly for small distances inside the house. One day, Sumi and Ravi took Chunmun to the garden outside. Gabboo also came along. Chunmun liked it. She liked the trees, the leaves and the fruits. She chirped joyfully, dancing and hopping from one place to another. However, Gabboo kept an eye on the cat.

Slowly, Chunmun started spending more and more time in the garden. Sometimes Gabboo carried her back to the house. Both Gabboo



and Chunmun would then eat out of the same pot. Enjoying every moment spent together.

By and by, Chunmun gained back her strength. She started flying higher. Now she was out of reach of Mano, the cat. She even started sleeping on the trees. Whenever she wanted to meet Sumi and Ravi, she would fly into the house and chirp loudly. She liked to sit on Sumi or Ravi's shoulder. And, sometimes on Gabboo's back, for a chat with him.



Sumi and Ravi were very happy. Chunmun too is happy. She can fly higher and higher. When the children offer her bread crumbs to eat, she chirps louder and louder.

As if telling them,  
'I am fine,  
I can fly  
and  
I am free!'





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